

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Office of Fire and Aviation  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705

July 22, 2003

In Reply Refer To:  
1400-900 (FA 200) P

EMS Transmission 07/22/03  
Instruction Memorandum No. OF&A 2003-031, Change 2  
Expires: 09/30/04

To: State and Center Directors, State FMOs and Servicing Personnel Officers

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Dispatcher Qualifications for Fire Dispatchers

**Program Area:** Fire Management

**Purpose:** To clarify the training requirement set forth in IM No. OF&A 2003-031, Change 1. Change 2 sets a 3-year time limit for completion of the Task Book referenced in that earlier memorandum, states that failure to successfully complete the Task Book within the 3-year time limit will result in the employee being removed from the Fire Dispatcher position, and specifies that the task list must be incorporated into the employee's Individual Development Plan.

**Policy/Action:** This memo supercedes Instruction Memorandum No. OF&A 2001-002 and sets forth new policy regarding requirements for fire dispatchers. The policy is a continuation of the Office of Fire and Aviation policy requiring fire line experience, but adds a training component that would allow individuals lacking fire line experience to qualify for fire dispatcher positions. The addition of a training component, coupled with the opportunity to hire individuals with fire line experience, allows us to develop a strong program, and provide a career ladder for the dispatch community with no loss of program integrity.

To be qualified for a dispatcher position, an individual must meet one of the following requirements:

1. Experience on an organized crew where an individual receives training and experience on a variety of initial attack, extended attack or project fires which would have provided an understanding of the support requirements provided by the dispatch function. This is the type of experience that could typically be met by serving in a temporary fire position in a BLM or other wildland fire management organization for one season; or

2. Completion of the fire training program identified in Appendix 1 within three years of first entering a fire dispatch position. Failure to complete the fire training program within the three-year time limit will result in the employee being removed from their dispatcher position.

This policy will apply when hiring career seasonal or permanent full time dispatchers and will be applicable for any position in the BLM where the major duty of the position is to dispatch personnel, equipment, or aviation resources in support of wildland fire.

A determination of any position to qualify for special firefighter retirement is a completely independent and separate issue, and one that is determined by the Firefighter/Law Enforcement Retirement Team. This policy pertains only to the qualifications required for a “position” and should not be confused with the Special Firefighter Retirement program.

**Timeframe:** Immediately on issuance of this Instruction Memorandum.

**Budget Impact:** None

**Contact:** Jim Knox, Chief, Human Resources (208) 387-5514.

**Union:** All offices with a union are required to make notification of this action to the union representatives.

Signed by:  
Larry E. Hamilton  
Director  
Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:  
Pat Lewis  
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.  
Office Services

1 Attachment  
1 - Appendix 1 (2pp)

Distribution:  
Ed Wehking, FA-101, MIB 3043  
Group Manager, Planning and Resources  
Group Manager, Support Services  
Group Manager, Fire Operations  
Group Manager, Aviation  
Cyndi Hogg, NARTC

## APPENDIX 1

**Issue:** Importance of wildland firefighting experience in performing the functions of fire dispatch duties.

Situation awareness and risk assessment are skills most effectively gained and developed through a combination of fireline experience and classroom training. Key employee development experience is best gained through first hand observation at fires, including initial attack, extended attack and large fires. Familiarity with fire operations is essential to developing an understanding of the support requirements for the dispatch organization. That familiarity can be developed through field visits led by an experienced fireline individual.

A task book, similar to the format sanctioned by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) should be used to outline and track the employee's (trainee's) progress. A combination of classroom and field orientation would be required for completion of the task book.

The task list must be included in the employee's (trainee's) Individual Development Plan. The IDP will also be used to track the employee's (trainee's) progress.

### Required Training Courses

I -100 Introduction to the Incident Command System  
S -130 Firefighter Training  
S -190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior

### Fire Suppression Orientation

5 fire visits	Escorted by fireline personnel who would explain and interpret the fire operation. Appropriate fireline escorts would include personnel with a fire operations background. Trainees will be required to attend a post fire critique or closeout.
1 field training	Observe or participate in field firefighter training or refresher activities including fireline and hose lay construction, running attack with engines, helicopter operations (only if available locally), mop up and shelter deployment exercises.
1 preparedness review	Observe a unit fire season preparedness review.
1 prescribed fire	Observe a prescribed fire operation. Fire personnel should be assigned to the trainee to explain process and answer questions.
1 cache tour	Visit a fire cache to gain knowledge of commonly used fire equipment and supplies. Fire personnel should accompany the trainee to explain the process and answer questions.

1 air operations visit	As available locally, tour an air tanker base, smokejumper base and/or helicopter base with fire personnel to familiarize trainee with fire air operations.
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10 fire crew briefings	Participate in local fire crew briefings.
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Upon completion of the training and orientations listed above, the task book would be signed by the local Fire Management Officer/designee and the trainee would be certified as having completed the developmental program.